

NW MISSOURIAN

SPORTS PREVIEW '09

INSIDE:

Northwest Volleyball

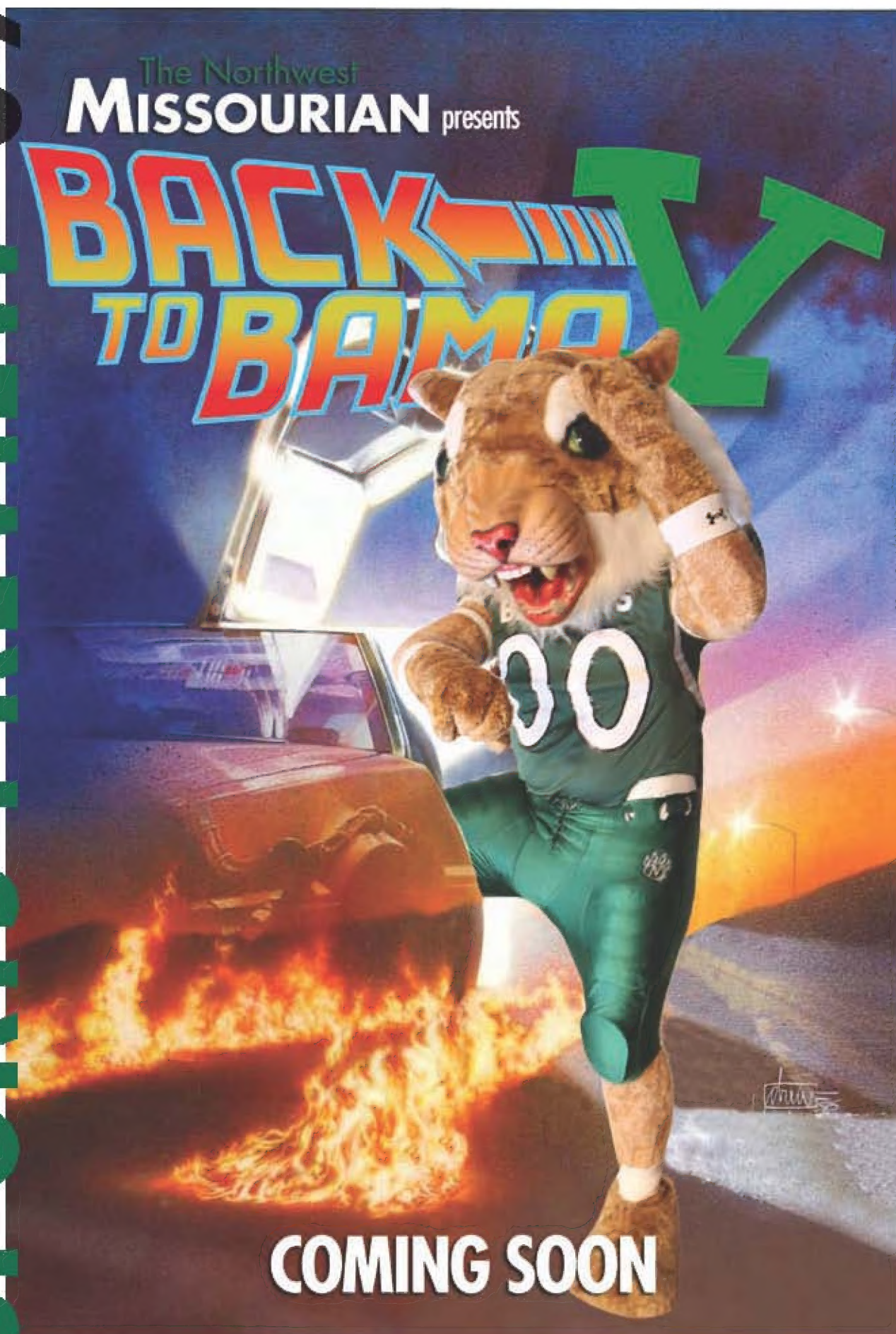
The Women's volleyball team put in hard work over the summer and looks to improve from a disappointing '08 season.

MHS Football

Twelve seniors on the Spoofhound roster reload the team after last year's run at the state championship.

MHS Volleyball

Girls' plan on improving on last year's 21 win season by taking home the district championship; something they just missed on last year.



COMING SOON

NW VOLLEYBALL

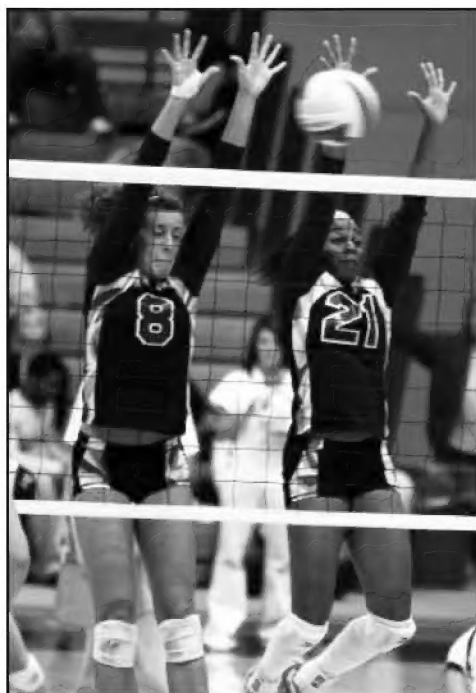


photo by

AMBER RYAN AND Iesha Haskins attempt to block an opposing kill.

Volleyball team struggled in '08, looking for redemption

By Brian Bosiljevac
 Sports Editor

The Northwest volleyball team put in many hours of hard work this off-season to try to avoid a repeat of the disappointment that came with last season.

The 2008 season brought the Bearcats a 10-23 record and a drive to be better.

"They worked really hard this off-season," head coach Anna Tool said. "They worked harder than any team I've ever had in an off-season. They came into preseason with high expectations and they weren't my expectations they were their expectations. That energy, that attitude, that demeanor, they carry that onto the floor and we

play with such a high pressure, fast paced, just push, push, push mentality. It's a fun team because they have such a competitive nature."

A competitive nature is going to be more than necessary for the 'Cats to accomplish their goal of finishing in the top five of the always talented MIAA conference.

Last season the MIAA sent six of the eight teams to the NCAA Regional Tournament. Northwest finished seventh in the MIAA last season and were picked to finish in the same position this year by the MIAA coaches.

"We weren't really surprised with the where we placed in the preseason polls," junior Amber Ryan said. "But

with the way the season has started already we hope to just carry that throughout the season. In our first couple games we played together, played really confident and we went out there and just had fun. If we go out there and play like that we will be in the top five."

This year's team is further ahead of any team since her four seasons being the head coach, Tool said.

Tool attributes the team's progression to the leadership of the junior class along with the addition of the transfers.

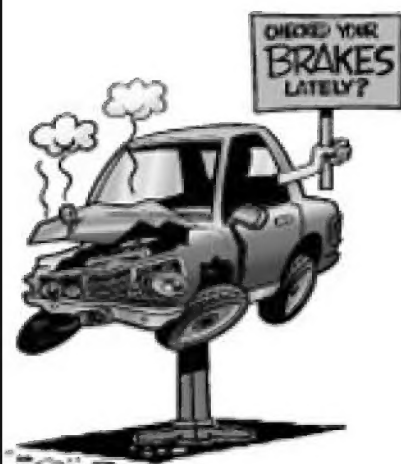
The three transfers are Amber Guthrie, who has worked her way into the number two outside hitter role; Monica Roof provides depth at the setter position. Laira Akin; a Division I

transfer from Marquette University, will be the starting setter and brings a "quarterback role" to the team, Tool said.

The important leap from sophomore to junior year has made Sara Falcone, Amber Ryan and Paige Spangenberg the leaders of this squad. The off-season has helped the three improve their on-court skills along with helping them prepare for the responsibilities that come with being the team's veterans.

"It's crazy, we were looking at the roster the other day and it's hard to believe we are already juniors," Ryan said. "I feel like I could still be a freshman or a sophomore, but we are definitely ready to step up and lead this team."

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NW SOCCER

Expectations high after record breaking '08 season

By Jason Lawrence
Asst. Sports Editor

The Northwest women's soccer team has a tough task ahead in following up the best season in program history, posting ten wins.

"We'd love to get 11 wins," head coach Tracy Hoza said. "Players got to see what it takes. They want to be better than last years' team. They want to work on that success and learn from last year's team."

The Bearcats went 10-8-2 last season and posted a 6-8-2 conference record, good enough for sixth overall.

"A Bearcat women's soccer program has never had a winning conference record," Hoza said. "Can we be the first team

HOME GAMES

Sept. 10 Truman 4 p.m.
Sept. 12 Mo. West noon
Sept. 19 SW Baptist 11:30 a.m.

Oct. 1 Central Missouri 4 p.m.
Oct. 10 Emporia State 2 p.m.
Oct. 24 Neb.-Omaha 11:30 a.m.
Oct. 31 Mo. Southern 2 p.m.

to win conference? Can we be the first team to have a winning conference season? Can we get an NCAA playoff? You always have to start off with expectations like that."

Last season ended with back-to-back shut out wins against the University of Central Missouri and Southwest Baptist University. Hoza thinks the momentum from those wins will carry over into this season and that it has carried over into practice.

The preseason coaches' poll is the replica of how the conference finished in 2008, with the Bearcats

slated into the sixth spot.

Northwest returns 17 letter winners and nine starters, including senior All-MIAA performers in goalkeeper Kira Lazenby and forward Andrea Fritze, from the record-setting program.

"From what we perceive to be a starting 11, we really could have a starting 15 or 16," Hoza said. "It's a great advantage and a great strength to have better players in better positions. We have to play together, teams that play together do better I think."

Hoza also added four freshmen in the off-season. They are

developing well and fitting into the system nicely, Hoza said.

"We do have a lot of experienced returners, but the new girls are going to give us a run for our money too," senior Shannon FitzGerald said. "It's only making everyone work harder because no one's spot is completely secure. The experience is nice, but the new girls that have worked hard and are showing real dedication are helping everyone improve and doing everything that they can to prove they should be the one's playing on the field."

The team voted seniors FitzGerald and Jessica Braun as well as junior Andrea Freeman captains.

FitzGerald and Braun agreed that a positive attitude and team chemistry will play big roles in

the team's success this season.

"It's about team chemistry for sure," Braun said. "But, we really have to stay positive, not only the starters, but everyone else on the sideline, which our team is really good about. Basically, our motto is be positive."

The Bearcats season got underway last Saturday at Bearcat Pitch against Southwest Oklahoma State as part of the Bearcat Soccer Classic. They followed it up with another match Sunday against Newman. The team came out of the weekend with a 2-0 record.

"We have really high hopes for this season," FitzGerald said. "We're expecting to do really well and we have hopes that we can get to play in the conference tournament."

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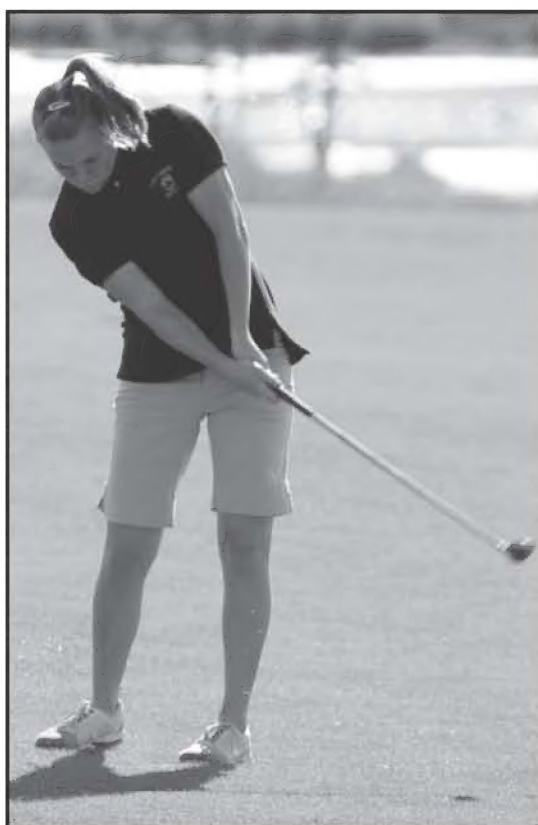
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MHS GOLF

JUNIOR AMY VAN DE VEN chips onto the green during one of last season's matches. Van de Ven will have to anchor a team since fellow junior Shannon McClellan tore her ACL over the summer and will miss the part of the season.



file photo

Girls' team increases in size, adds new experience

By Dustin Sander
Convergence Director

Maryville girls' golf looks different from last season with nearly twice as many girls and featuring four freshmen with golf experience.

Coach Brenda Ricks is excited to have the added golfers along with the competition more girls bring to the game.

"I really like it a lot," junior Amy Van de Ven said. "It gives us a lot more of a competitive edge and makes us want to work harder."

The four freshmen have all played golf before and started from day one competing with the rest of the team at the varsity level.

"I think they all can get there," Ricks said. "We've had two matches and (freshman) Megan Shell shot the low score for our team. She shot

a 45 ... every freshman is capable of that so we've really got a lot of promise this year."

The team is only allowed to have five golfers compete in each match, although every golfer is allowed to golf during the matches. Ricks has an open competition before every match to determine the five golfers whose scores will count each week.

Van de Ven and sophomore Brooke Byland are the only two returning to the team and will continue to hold the top two spots on the varsity roster for now.

Junior Shannon McClellan tore her ACL over the summer and won't be able to compete in the first part of the season, but is still practicing with the team.

"I'm going to move it around too," Ricks said. "It's my hopes to get everybody a letter, especially

the four freshmen because they're all so close in ability. It's called the game of golf so I don't know how their games are going to grow and progress, I hope they all do."

The team has high hopes for the 2009 season after their success last season; the team won districts and the entire team went to state. At state McClellan was the 'Hounds top finisher at 57th.

The Spoofhounds have already started their season with a win over Smithville on Aug. 25 with a team score of 206. Maryville also played Chillicothe and Cameron on the 26th where the 'Hounds split the match; beating Cameron and losing to Chillicothe with a team score of 206.

The 'Hounds continue their season with their first home match at Mazingo Lake Golf Course tonight against Lafayette at 4 p.m.

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FALL 2009 INFORMATION SESSIONS

SEPT. 8: AFRICA, MEETING ROOM D 6PM

SEPT. 28: AUSTRALIA, MEETING ROOM D 5PM

OCTOBER 19: ASIA, MEETING ROOM D 5 PM

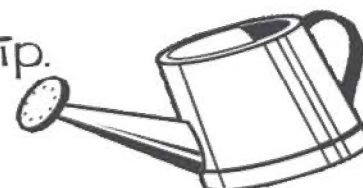
NOVEMBER 9: LATIN AMERICA, MEETING ROOM D 5PM

DECEMBER 1: EUROPE, MEETING ROOM D 6PM

SEPTEMBER 9 MISSOURI LONDON PROGRAM
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NW CROSS COUNTRY

Top runners return, more experienced 'Cats hit the trails

By Jason Lawrence
Asst. Sports Editor

A wealth of experience will lead the Bearcats across the cross country trails as they set to open the 2009-10 season.

The men's team returns their top four runners from last season, including All-MIAA performers Zach Layton and Trevor Johannsen.

In addition to Layton and Johannsen, Head Coach Scott Lorek expects Clay Martin, T.R. Pursell and Jared Walker to step up and be key runners for the men.

"It's going to be really good," Johannsen said. "I know the guys are ranked last so far, I don't know how they said that because we have our top four back and only the top five score

in cross country, so we pretty much have everybody who's going to be a contributing factor back this year."

The women return six of their top seven runners and add former all-region performer Anna O'Brien, who redshirted last season.

"She's (O'Brien) been the best runner here for a number of years," Lorek said. "With her back, it changes us from a pack team to a team with a good front-runner, which we've really needed. Our top two runners a lot of the time last season, were freshman Angela Adams and Brittany Poole, but a lot of the group has really had a great summer. I think the women's team is better off overall."

Northwest has added some depth to both teams with trans-

fer Jordan Esry becoming available for the women and Pursell returning from injury to bolster the men's line-up along with people stepping up over the summer to be competitive this year. Senior Mary Jantz said the team should be good with all of the returning runners.

"It will be phenomenal," Jantz said. "I think we can build off of last year. We worked hard this summer and we're going to have a strong pack. Anna will be a good first runner and we'll need to stick with her."

The 'Cats were picked to finish eighth in the conference in the preseason coaches poll on both the men's and the women's sides.

"We need to move up in the conference standings and be more competitive on the

conference level," Lorek said. "I think last year was really a building year. We had a lot of young runners leading the teams. I think both teams could potentially be really strong this year, we need to just put it all together."

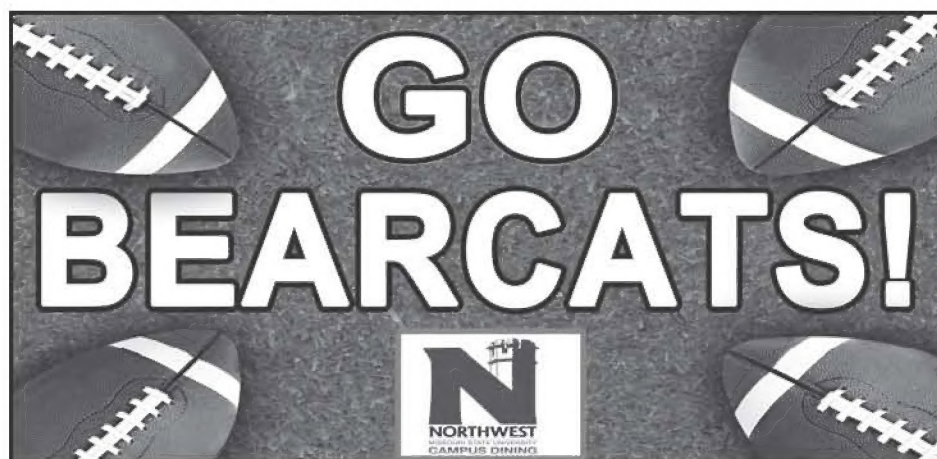
Northwest begins the season with their only home meet of the year. The Bearcat/Spoofhound Open will take place Sept. 12 at the Bearcat Cross Country Course.

"It's fun to be at home," Lorek said. "Our course is challenging, so it's a good course to start the year on since it's not a real fast one. Mainly, it's just a chance to get started before we head off to meets. The main thing is just how we're going to compete, we'll see in that setting if people have changed."




file photo

SOPHOMORE ANGELA ADAMS competes at the Bearcat/Spoofhound Open in the first meet of the Bearcats' '08 season.



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BOBBY B. GOODE

‘Cats look to pick up where they left off, continue on past success

By Dustin Sander
Convergence Director

Northwest football looks to continue on annual success

The Bearcats look to add their fifth straight MIAA Championship and to continue with their post-season success.

On the offensive side of the ball Northwest has a lot of new faces; four new linemen, a tight end, two starting receivers and a quarterback.

Junior Blake Bolles take over the reigns after two-year starter, Joel Osborn, graduated. Bolles saw playing time in all 15 games last season. He scored 12 touchdowns, 6 passing and 6 rushing, and didn’t commit a turnover all season.

“I feel really good about it,” Boles said. “I’m really excited to take over the reigns and actually have that starting job. The guys we’ve got at receiver, running back, the line positions, the tight end, everybody, I’m just real excited all across the board.”

Joining Bolles in the back-field is All-American running back, senior LaRon Council. He rushed for 1,739 yards, 36 touchdowns and had eight games with over 100 yards rushing.

“I don’t think that we’re really going to be any different,” head coach Mel Tjeerdsma said. “I think lot of people outside of our system think we’re going to run the ball more with Blake and that’s really not true. We’re going to throw the football and we’re going to try and stay as balanced as we always have. I’m

really excited about our receivers; they’ve had a great camp. I think we’ll be able to run the football obviously, with Blake and LaRon. I think our offense is going to be real good.”

Another loss for the ‘Cats is kick returner and wide receiver Kendall Wright. Wright averaged 114.5 all-purpose yards per game. Northwest will use three players to replace Wright; red-shirt freshman Jordan Simmons and junior Brian Shannon will take turns returning kicks and sophomore Jake Soy will be starting at wide receiver.

On the defensive side of the ball the ‘Cats will look very similar. Northwest only lost two starters from last years squad; cornerbacks Chris LeFlore and Brandon Clayton. The defense only allowed 288 points the entire season (19.2 points per game) and only gave up 4,517 yards over the course of 15 games (301.1 yards per game).

“I’m excited about our defense, we don’t want to put too much pressure on them. We still have to do things on offense,” Tjeerdsma said. “I think our defense is going to be one of the better defense’s we’ve had and that’s saying a lot because we’ve had a lot of good defenses. And these guys so far look like they’ve picked up where they left off last year and that’s a good sign.”

The ‘Cats kicked off the season last Thursday at Abilene Christian with a 19-14 loss. They will open the MIAA season to night at Southwest Baptist University at 6 p.m.

NORTHWEST DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE

Quarterback

11 Blake Bolles, 6-4, 210, Jr.
14 Blake Christopher, 6-2, 215, So.

Tailback

27 LaRon Council, 5-10, 210, Sr.
28 Kelvin Austin, 5-6, 180, Jr.

Fullback

25 Previn Perry, 5-10, 210, So.
45 Benjamin Pritchett, 5-9, 190, Jr.

Wide Receiver

10 Abe Qaoud, 6-0, 200, Sr.
9 Brian Shannon, 5-10, 190, Jr.

Wide Receiver

2 Nick Rhodes, 6-4, 210, Sr.
4 Tyler Shaw, 6-0, 185, RS-Fr.

Wide Receiver

1 Jake Soy, 6-3, 210, So.
12 John Hinchey, 6-2, 215, RS-Fr.

Tight End

85 Kyle Kilgore, 6-5, 235, So.
80 Chris Owens, 6-3, 250, So.

Left Tackle

77 Dane Wardenburg, 6-7, 290, Jr.
61 Adam McElderry, 6-3, 295, So.

Left Guard

70 Brett Grozinger, 6-4, 280, Jr.
74 Rod Williams, 6-4, 300, RS-Fr.

Center

72 Ryan Lessman, 6-2, 290, Jr.
62 Ross Hastert, 6-2, 275, Sr.

Right Guard

76 Cody Johnson, 6-1, 290, So.
75 Justin Callaway, 6-1, 295, Jr.

Right Tackle

73 Jason Wiseman, 6-4, 275, Jr.
71 John Petroff, 6-3, 280, RS-Fr.

DEFENSE

Strong End

94 Kyle Sunderman, 6-4, 265, Jr.

87 Roberto Davis, 6-3, 260, Jr.

Strong Tackle

91 Tyler Roach, 6-2, 315, Sr.
99 Josh Lorensen, 6-3, 280, So.

Nose Guard

98 Shayne Shade, 6-2, 300, Jr.
59 Ryan Meyer, 6-2, 265, RS-Fr.

Defensive End

97 Sean Paddock, 6-2, 255, Sr.
44 Jayson Bates, 6-1, 250, Sr.
90 Micah Wilson, 6-2, 250, Jr.

Sam Linebacker

32 Evan Wilmes, 5-11, 215, Sr.
37 Bill Baudler, 6-2, 230, Jr.

Mike Linebacker

56 Adam Vondrak, 6-1, 245, Jr.
57 Troy Matthews, 5-11, 230, Jr.

Will Linebacker

52 Willie Horn, 6-0, 230, Jr.
50 Chad Kilgore, 6-1, 225, So.

Extra Backer

22 Ike Urm-Eke, 5-11, 205, Sr.
33 Ben Langston, 6-0, 205, So.

Left Cornerback

3 Ryan Jones, 5-11, 195, Jr.
21 Kevin Okonta, 5-10, 185, So.
34 Clint Moore, 5-10, 200, Jr.

Free Safety

15 Miles Burnsidess, 5-11, 195, Sr.
19 Cam Wierson, 6-0, 190, Sr.

Strong Safety

8 Aldwin Foster-Rettig, 6-1, 210, Jr.
30 Marcus Martin, 6-1, 210, Jr.

Right Cornerback

7 Justin Welch, 5-11, 190, Jr.
23 E.J. Hawkins, 5-9, 180, Sr.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Punter

18 Michael Stadler, 6-2, 240, Jr.

Place Kicker

38 Joe Schroeder, 6-0, 200, Sr.



BACK TO THE TRENCHES

New faces on o-line ready for opportunity to start

By Dustin Sander
Convergence Editor

With the 2009 season knocking at the door, the biggest question on the mind of a Northwest football fan is the offensive line.

The o-line will feature four new faces for the Bearcats; junior Dane Wardenburg at left tackle, junior Brett Grozinger at left guard, junior Ryan Lessman at center and sophomore Cody Johnson at right guard.

“I think these guys are ready,” junior quarterback Blake Bolles said. “They’ve been waiting for their opportunity to get in there and play for two or three years now. They’ve been working hard all summer and I think they’re definitely ready for it.”

For the last three seasons the ‘Cats offense line was anchored by the four linemen; Reid Kirby, Tom Pestock, Matt Nelson and Jeremy Davis. They all of which ran out of eligibility after the 2008 season.

The only returning starter to the o-line is right tackle Jason Wiseman

who started all 15 games for the ‘Cats last season and saw playing in the 2007 season as well.

Wardenburg started three games in a reserve role last season at left tackle during Kirby’s suspension.

While Wiseman and Wardenburg saw action as starters last season, the other three linemen all saw time as reserve linemen.

The starters are set, but the reserves are still fuzzy in the eyes of the coaching staff.

“So far the starters have done real well I don’t have any doubt about the starters,” head coach Mel Tjeerdsma said “Our back up situation on the offensive line is still a puzzle that we’re working on. Hopefully that’s a situation that we won’t be faced with a lot.”

Only two back ups have seen any playing time at Northwest; sophomore Adam McElderry and senior Ross Hastert. Two others are red-shirt freshmen and junior Justin Callaway is a transfer from NAIA Lindenwood University in St. Charles, Mo.



photo by seth cook

JUNIOR QUARTERBACK BLAKE Bolles stiff arms his way past a defender in the Bearcats’ loss to Abilene Christian. Bolles looks to improve off the limited action he saw last year.

MHS FOOTBALL

'Hounds hope to repeat last year's success

By Jason Lawrence
Asst. Sports Editor

Coming off of a run to the Class 2 State Championship that they lost 10-7 to Christian Brothers High School, the Spoofhound football team looks to reload after losing a valuable senior class.

Senior Derek DeMott, junior Gavin Talmage and sophomore Anthony Groumoutis replace graduates John Farmer, Adam Mattson and Wyatt Maudlin in head coach Chris Holt's three running back rotation.

DeMott ran for 166 yards and two touchdowns and added a key interception in Maryville's 28-25 loss to Hickman Mills.

"He (DeMott) had a very

good game," Holt said. "He's a senior, he's a leader and he's done this before and been a big part of our football team the last two years. I'm glad that he stepped up like he did."

Talmage added 79 yards and a touchdown, and Groumoutis chipped in 54 yards and a touchdown and kicked an extra point.

The 'Hounds feature 12 seniors, including all-state linebacker Evan Johnson and offensive linemen Clint Thompson and Brad Schieber.

Tom Scarbrough also replaces Brian Lohafer, who retired following last season, as defensive coordinator. Scarbrough has simplified Lohafer's defense to make the transition

HOME GAMES

9/18 vs. Smithville, 5 p.m.
 10/5 vs. Chillicothe, 5 p.m.
 10/19 vs. Trenton, 5 p.m.

easier on the players since a lot of the team has to play both offense and defense now, unlike in years past.

Maryville will take on Lafayette High School at 7 p.m. on Friday at Maryville High School and try to even their record.

"We'll bounce back because our kids know how to win," Holt said. "I expect us to come out and play well, we'll be fine, we just have to get in a little better shape and games like tonight help you do that."



SENIOR RUNNING BACK Derek DeMott braces for a hit in the limited action he saw last year. This year DeMott will be a key part of the three running back rotation used by the 'Hounds.

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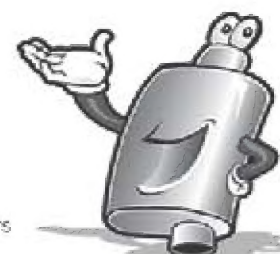
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MHS VOLLEYBALL

Eleven seniors hope experience pays off

By Brian Bosiljevac
Sports Editor

The Maryville High School volleyball team has high hopes as it enters the 2009 season.

The Spoofhounds put 21 games in the win column last year and came up one game short of a district championship, losing to Bishop LeBlond in the championship match.

That team that lost in the district championship looks very similar to this year's squad. After losing three players from the 2008 team the 'Hounds begin this season with 11 seniors and one junior.

"It's nice having all of seniors together," Tracy Jensen said. "We all want the same thing, we all push each other. At different times certain people stand out, but everyone is a leader in their own

way."

That one thing that all the girls want is no small feat. This time they don't want to let that district championship slip away. Actually they want to take the conference championship with it, seniors Jensen and Libbey Howell said.

The team has been battling injuries throughout the preseason, but it has only added to team's confidence.

"We don't give up," Howell said. "With injuries we've proven that. Everyone is pushing hard to get back. We know how hard we have to work to get where we want to be."

The 'Hounds only lost nine games last season and hope to drop that number on a quest for the perfect season.

The talent and experience is there for this seasoned team. The one thing the 'Hounds are cau-

tious of is playing down to their opponents ability level.

"We know how well we can do, but sometimes we just settle," Jensen said. "What ever else is going on we have to push ourselves to be at our highest level at all times."

This season has been a long time coming for the 11 seniors who have spent three years awaiting their final year in a 'Hounds jersey.

For this senior class it doesn't all end in the win and loss column. A big part of their job is preparing the girls who will someday take over for them.

"They have been doing good," Howell said. "They are keeping up really well and JV is a good scrimmage for us because we play them in practice. Our freshmen are doing really well too. We can already tell they are going to do well."



SENIOR JESSICA FROM attempts to spike the ball in a game 2008 game against Benton. The Spoofhounds are returning eleven seniors and look to capture the district championship they lost last season.

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MHS SOFTBALL

SOPHOMORE PITCHER HOLLY WHILMARH tosses a pitch in a 10-3 victory over Savannah last season. The Spoofhounds have high expectations following last year's run into the post-season.



file photo

Spoofhound softball seeks perfection

By Jason Lawrence
 Asst. Sports Editor

The Maryville softball team is firing on all cylinders after their first two games and has high expectations for the remainder of the season.

The Spoofhounds combined for 25 runs in winning their first two games, but hitting remains to be a big concern for head coach Jacqui Conn.

"We're working a lot on hitting," Conn said. "Last year we had a lot of one and two run ball games. We've been doing a lot of hitting off of live pitching, hitting drills and a lot of seeing the ball in and getting reps that way. We're working a lot on hitting to take the pressure off of pitching."

The 'Hounds are following a season in which they went 19-1 during the regular season

and lost in the district championship.

"I hate the whole unfinished business quote and we had that sour end to the year last year, that gets old," Conn said. "It's going to be tricky, but it's something we planned on doing (following up last season). The girls are a year older and have been in those pressure situations and know the importance of executing in those situations."

The girls have high expectations following last year's run into the post-season.

"We're shooting for the stars," Conn said. "That's good because we're capable of reaching them. We want to win conference, bat .350 as a team, have one or less errors a game and win districts and go on to post-season play. We have a lot of high goals this year."

The 'Hounds will be led this season by ten returning letterwinners, but it depends on the situation on who will step-up, Conn said.

"If we really need someone to step up for hitting we're going to have a different person if we need a defensive shut down and make a play," Conn said. It depends on the game and on the situation and I don't want to single out any one person."

The girls take on St. Joseph Lafayette tonight in St. Joseph at 4:30 p.m. and then head off to Auburn, Neb., to participate in the Auburn Tournament.

"We have Lafayette on Thursday and that's going to be a tough game," Conn said. "They have a really good pitcher. We're going to play a lot of Nebraska teams in Auburn and it's good to see something different."

Spoofhound Softball Schedule

9/1 vs. Cameron, 5 p.m. - Home
 9/3 vs. Lafayette, 4:30 p.m. - Away
 9/5 Auburn, NE Tournament, 9 a.m.
 9/8 vs. Savannah, 4:30 p.m. - Away

9/10 vs. Benton, 5 p.m. - Home
 9/15 vs. Chillicothe, 5 p.m. - Home
 9/17 vs. Smithville, 4:30 - Away
 9/21 vs. Jefferson, 5 p.m. - Away
 9/22 vs. LeBlond*, 4:30 - Away
 9/24 vs. Benton, 5 p.m. - Away
 9/26 Mid Buchanan Tournament
 9/28 vs. Lafayette, 5 p.m. - Home
 10/1 vs. No. Platte, 5 p.m. - Home

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MHS SOCCER

14 players return from previous youthful season

By Jason Lawrence
Asst. Sports Editor

The Maryville High School boys' soccer team has high expectations following a youth infused 18-8 season last year.

"We just want to grow on what we did last year," Head Coach Stuart Collins said. "We want to be competitive and get through districts if we can. We have a lot of players that were young last year and got a lot of time. Hopefully they got stronger and quicker and became better ball handlers over the summer."

During the summer, the team played in a competitive league in Kansas City and held a camp at the school before two-a-days to help prepare them for this season.

They worked on touch passing, skill moves and getting stronger in the weight room, Collins said.

The Spoofhounds return 14 players from last year, when they didn't field a junior varsity team, which resulted in all of the fresh-

men seeing varsity playing time.

"I've been really impressed with our sophomores in this group," senior Jackson Graves said. "They've been pretty solid on the field and they'll know how to act in a game."

Absent from those returning is the school's all-time leading scorer, Jon Rogers, who graduated last spring.

"Last year we were kind of a one man team because we had Jon," senior John Morton said. "This year, it's a lot more balanced. Pretty much everybody is back, so we're expecting to do a lot this year."

However, the team should be able to use all the experience it gained last season as this season progresses.

"It's going to be something we can build on," Collins said. "A lot of freshmen don't get to play varsity until they get to be sophomores or juniors and these guys already have a season under their belts. We should be able to pick it up and go from here."

The team voted Morton, Graves and fel-

low senior Chad Proctor as captains this year.

"We told them about a week before we chose captains that we wanted them to pick people that they would follow and would lead them in the right direction," Collins said. "Someone that would listen to them, but if the group decided they wanted to do something that wasn't in the best interests of the group that the captains would be strong enough to stand up to the group."

This week, the 'Hounds will open their season with the Barstow tournament.

"I expect to be in the finals, which means we have to beat Barstow," Collins said. "That's really important to us because Barstow is in our district and this is the only



file photo

BRIAN SNEAD outruns a defender. The 'Hounds look to improve upon their 18-8 season last year with 14 returning players.

time we'll see them, so it's pretty important for us to get past Barstow."

It's important to the tournament because it will determine a lot about seeding for districts, Morton said.

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